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chain o' lakes

STATE PARK

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THE PARK

Chain O'Lakes State Park, in northeastern Illinois, is in McHenry and Lake counties 20 miles west of Lake Michigan and 4 miles south of the Illinois-Wisconsin border. The 1,541-acre park and the 3,230-acre conservation area are primarily water and marshland. The area contains Illinois largest concentration of natural lakes.

The State of Illinois purchased the initial acquisition of 840 acres in 1945.

THE LAKES

The state park borders 3 of the 10 lakes in the Fox Chain O'Lakes—Grass, Marie and Bluff. The other 7 lakes in the chain are Fox, Pistakee, Channel, Petite, Catherine, Nippersink and Redhead, but they lie outside of the state park area. The lakes have a combined total of 6,465 acres of water and 488 miles of shoreline. The last of the glaciers in this part of the country formed these lakes.

The Fox River intersects the park from the north to south and then flows into the lakes.

HISTORY

Indians: About 1635 when the first white man came into the area, the land was inhabited by Indians of the Algonquin linguistic family of the Great Lakes Region. They were the Woodland Indians, mainly Fox and Sauk (sometimes called Sac). These Indians came originally from the vicinity of Quebec and Montreal and had been driven west by the Iroquois. Other tribes around the lakes were the Menomonees, Winnebagoes, Potawatomis and some of the Ottawa and Chippewa tribes who lived with the Potawatomis.

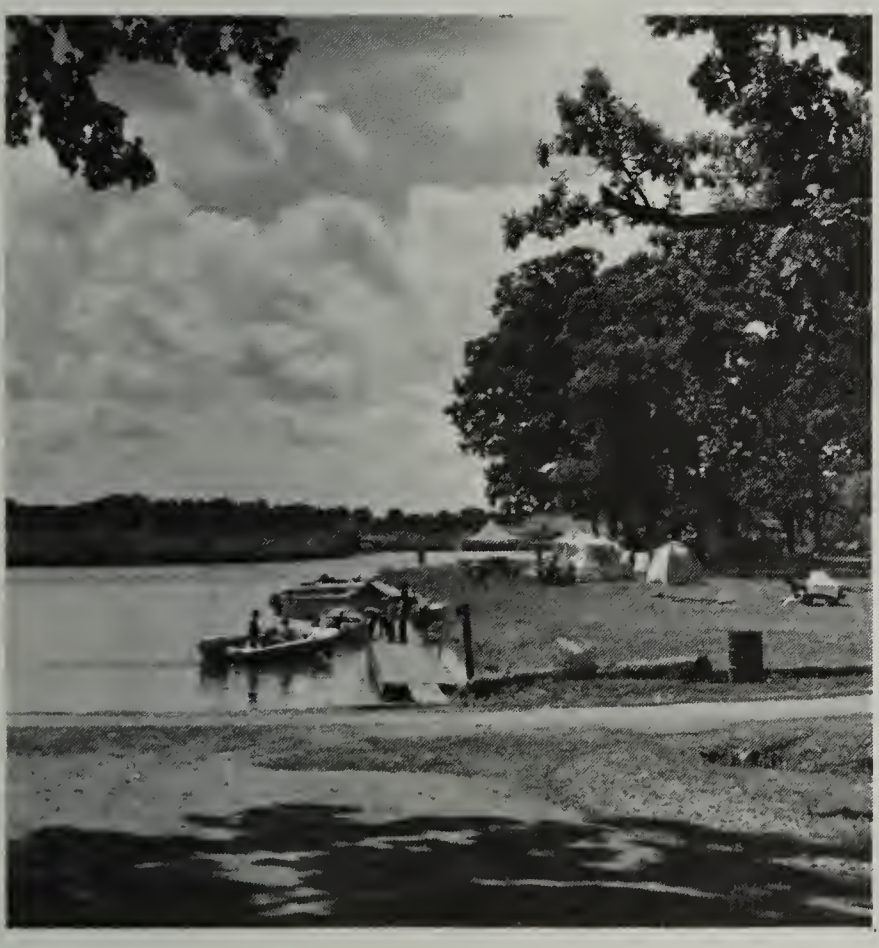
The tribes lived in bark wigwams fashioned by bending poles into dome shapes and covering them with bark. In the wintertime the coverings were sometimes made of mats woven from cattail stalks.

Indians used Crabapple Island as a place to exact tribute from other tribes using the channel and because there was good gardening on the island.

The Sauk and Fox Indians were active and courageous in the subjugation of the Illinois confederacy of Indians. In the war with England a party of Sauk and Fox fought on the side of the British. Black Hawk, the famous Sauk chief, fought on the British side in the war of 1812. Abraham Lincoln was one of the young volunteers who enlisted to fight the Indians during the Black Hawk War. Jefferson Davis was reputed to have been a lieutenant in the Army at the time Lincoln was a private in the Illinois militia, and both were reputed to have been in the Chain O'Lakes area at the same time.

French: In 1673 Jolliet and Marquette traveled the Fox River in their explorations. French traders were the first white men to explore the area by canoe. The first white settlement was at Fort Hill, a large mound rising out of the prairie, formerly a lookout point for the Indians.

Purchased Farm: In the 1930's a CCC camp became the Chain O'Lakes Conservation Area and, in 1957, this became Chain O'Lakes State Park. The farm on the park land, purchased in 1969, came into the hands of the Stevens family in 1843 under a land grant to Major Alfred Stevens,



who came into the area from Richmond, Virginia, in 1837.

NATURAL SCENE

The area of Chain O'Lakes State Park is chiefly fresh water bog over deep peat deposits which provides a plant and animal habitat. Land above the bog level is gently sloping to a rise of 200 feet, except for occasional rolling glacier deposits of a variety of silty loams.

Most of the land is covered with sparse to dense timber of such varieties as Scotch pine, oak, cherry, hickory, elm, birch, sumac and spruce. Some of the animals in the region are chipmunks, ground squirrels, gophers, deer, rabbits, mink, opossum, skunk, raccoons and fox. The famous lotus beds are in Grass Lake.

FACILITIES

Picnicking: Several picnic areas with tables, outdoor stoves, water and toilets are scattered throughout the park. There is also one pavilion, various playground equipment, and a concession stand that offers a variety of refreshments.

Winter Sports: When the ice is thick enough, ice-skating and ice fishing are permitted. Sledding is also popular.

Hunting: Pheasants may be hunted by permit only in the conservation area adjoining the park. For the statewide pheasant hunting dates, check each year with your local conservation officer or the park ranger.

During the hunting season, the park is closed for other activities. Once the season is over, the park will re-open.

Fishing and Boating: Fishing for bluegill, walleye, crappie, bass, northern pike, catfish and bullhead is popular around the river and lake banks within the park. Boat rentals, docks, fishing piers, and two launching ramps are also provided. There is no limit on motor size.

Camping: There are seven tent or trailer camping areas with their own picnic areas and a modern shower building. A limited amount of electricity and two sanitary stations are available for trailer units. The Oak Point campground on the Fox River has free boat launching ramps and is a popular area for boaters and fishermen.

Group camping is also available; groups of over 25 persons must have advance permission to enter the park. All campers need a permit from the park staff.

Interpretation Program: Park personnel are available during the summer months to provide interpretive nature experiences for the visitor.

Please: The park is for all to enjoy so help keep it clean. Put all litter in the nearest available trash container. No plants or parts of any tree may be removed or damaged.

If you need help or have a question, contact the ranger.

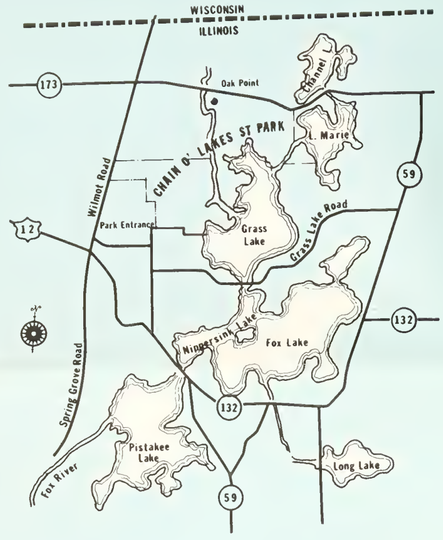
FOR YOUR INFORMATION . . .

Admittance will not be granted groups of 25 or more persons to any state park or conservation area unless permission from the park ranger has been secured to use the facilities. It is also required that groups of minors have adequate supervision and that at least one responsible adult accompany each group not exceeding 15 minors. All pets must be on a leash.

Numerous state parks and memorials are within easy access of every part of the state. Lodges, cabins and dining rooms are important features of Illinois Beach, Starved Rock, Pere Marquette, White Pines Forest and Giant City. Reservations for lodging should be made with lodge managers.

All state parks are open the year round. When weather conditions necessitate the closing of park roads during freezing and thawing periods, access to park facilities is by foot only.

For more details about this site, contact Ranger, R.R. 1, Box 423A, Spring Grove, 60081, phone 312/587-5512. For information on other Illinois sites, write the Department of Conservation, Information and Education Section, State Office Building, Springfield, 62706.



Route 173

Boat Launch

Trailer Disposal

Gate House

Oak Point Camping Area

Fox River

Grass Lake

Turner Lake North Camping Area

Whitetail Trail Camping Area

Ranger's Office

Trailer Disposal

Shelter

Oak Grove Picnic Area

Turner Lake

Honeysuckle Hollow Camping Area

Catfish Cove Camping Area

Concession

Boat Launch & Rental Area

Turner Lake South Camping Area

Maple Grove Picnic Area

Mud Lake East Camping Area

Park Entrance

State Park Road

Ranger's Res.

Mud Lake

Mud Lake West Youth Group Camping Area

Grass Lake